



Department of Conservation & Recreation
CONSERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL & RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Natural Areas Protection

Natural Area Registry

VIRGINIA is a state of extraordinary natural diversity, from the sandy beaches of the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay, across the gentle hills of the Piedmont and the Shenandoah Valley, to the mountains of the western highlands. Residents of the Commonwealth take great pride in the beauty of our natural heritage. More than 2,400 native species of plants, 848 vertebrate animals, and 30,000 invertebrate animals interact with Virginia's rocks, soils, and water to form unique natural communities and ecosystems. However, some species and natural communities which flourished in Virginia's past are very threatened today. As the human population increases, so does the conversion of the natural lands to other uses. As a result, the land that certain plants and animals depend upon for survival may be permanently damaged or destroyed. Fortunately, we are learning to take precautions and property owners are acting voluntarily to safeguard the best that remains of our natural world.

What is the Registry of Natural Areas?

Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas is a program developed to encourage voluntary conservation of significant lands in private and public ownership. Our staff has identified more than 900 natural areas throughout the Commonwealth which serve as habitat for our natural heritage resources. Landowners of these sites play a crucial role in the conservation of such lands and in turn the future survival of the natural communities and rare species they support. Species are often lost simply because the landowner is unaware of its existence and needs. By informing and recognizing the landowners of these significant natural areas, the Registry of Natural Areas Program reduces the chance that these resources may be unknowingly destroyed. The program is operated by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency devoted to the identification and protection of the Commonwealth's most significant natural areas.

What Areas Qualify for the Registry?

To be eligible for placement on the registry, a property must support significant natural heritage resources for Virginia, such as: habitat for rare, threatened, or endangered plants or animals rare or state significant natural communities significant geologic landmarks

What say does the landowner have in the registration process?

The decision to register belongs entirely to the landowner. This is a voluntary and nonbinding agreement that may be terminated by either party at any time.

Does registration of a natural area permit public access to private property?

No. Registration of a natural area provides no rights of public access to private property unless requested by the owner. As with any private land, visitors must receive permission from the landowner before entering the property. Locations of registered natural areas are not publicized unless the owner so desires.

What commitment does the landowner make?

Landowners who participate in **Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas** commit to the following: to voluntarily preserve and protect natural heritage resources on their land to the best of their ability to notify DCR of any potential threats to these resources, such as pollution, clearing of land, etc. to notify DCR of any intent to sell or transfer ownership of the property

What recognition does the landowner receive for this commitment?

In honor of the voluntary commitment to protect the natural area, the landowner will receive a plaque recognizing the land for its significant features and the owner for their stewardship commitment.
